



Loma Prieta Chapter serving San Mateo, Santa Clara & San Benito Counties

January 14, 2013

Members of Sunnyvale City Council and Planning Commission
City of Sunnyvale Via e-mail

Re: Lawrence Station Area Plan – phase II – Joint Study Session

Dear Sunnyvale Council members and Planning Commission Members,

*The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter supports grouping new homes, jobs and services near transit. **Transportation** accounts for approximately 50% of greenhouse gas emissions in the Bay Area and reducing transportation demand is the most significant opportunity for our cities to meet California’s climate change goals, specifically **AB32 and SB375**.*

The Sierra Club has developed [guidelines for evaluating Station Area Plans \(SAP\)](#).

We focus on five issues:

1. **Compact Development** to use valuable land more efficiently at a major transit hub
2. **Community and Economic Benefits** to assure a vibrant neighborhood with a sense of identity
3. **Pedestrian Priority** as the primary mode of transportation within the SAP
4. **Transportation Plan** to provide realistic options for people and decrease automobile usage
5. **Energy / Resource Efficiency** targets for buildings and streets to meet high sustainability goals

Sunnyvale is using an exemplary participatory process generating community feedback in developing Lawrence Station Area Plan (LSAP). We offer the following input for your consideration:

<p>1. Jobs-Housing balance ⁱ <i>Describe the goal of how the Lawrence Station area plan will address the jobs - housing balance</i></p>	<p>It is increasingly clear that the bigger shortage is not of jobs but of housing. A goal should be clearly defined and a target should be identified and included in the plan. The EIR should study the impact of the ultimate potential build-out.</p>
<p>2. Land Use <i>Compact development with Mixed Use provides 24/7 activity to create a vibrant livable community</i></p> <p><i>Transfer of Development Rights would provide flexibility as would Basic (by right) FAR/DUAⁱⁱ coupled with a Maximum FAR/DUA</i></p>	<p>We strongly urge you to implement a plan that allows MIXED USE in the entire ½ mile radius around the train station. Every attempt should be made to include a diversity of uses and users.</p> <p>The area closest to the train station (possibly designated for Commercial use) should have NO parking in the buildings so that auto traffic is not drawn into this pedestrian zone closest to the station. Satellite public parkingⁱⁱⁱ should be provided for this area using “in-lieu” parking fees.</p>
<p>3. Pedestrian Connectivity <i>This is the single most critical element for success. Planning at every phase should start with pedestrian convenience.</i></p>	<p>The tracks present an impassable barrier for pedestrians between north and south – physically and psychologically. There is only one passageway, at the station, and it is not an easy or an aesthetic experience. A bike bridge is a very lengthy and undesirable connection for</p>

A **Pedestrian Master Plan** showing pedestrian network and time taken to walk certain distances should be an early design criteria in LSAP



Pedestrian-bike passageway under train tracks – Palo Alto

6. Classify each street in LSAP

*Pedestrian Priority
Mixed Traffic or
Auto Priority*

Maximum speed in LSAP to be 25mph. Eliminate auto “level-of-service” in the LSAP in favor of pedestrian priority

Include bike connectivity when designing every street

3. A Sense of Place

The unique features of the area can help to create a sense of place

pedestrians as it is even longer than a tunnel.

Attractive passageways under track: Landscaped, easy, safe, highly visible and attractive passageways under the tracks at an interval of every block, if possible, would help stitch the two sides together.

Shortcuts to reduce walking is a primary strategy to keep people from using their cars.

Park once and walk: For people who drive to the area, parking once and being able to walk fast and easily to take care of all tasks will keep traffic down.

Use pedestrian LOS: Make walking more convenient and faster

- Reduced width at all crosswalks make it faster to walk
- Mid-block crosswalks at any block longer than 200'^{iv}
- Automatically activated crosswalk signals at high pedestrian traffic areas
- Create psychology of pedestrian environment with wide crosswalks, wide sidewalks, pedestrian street furniture like potted plants, no curbs, special road surfaces to slow traffic

A new street grid is being introduced to improve connectivity.

Streets should be clearly classified into at least these three categories

- **Pedestrian Priority** (sometimes known as Main Street), with traffic moving very slowly – **5 to 15mph**. Pedestrian priority streets can be closed off on weekends for farmers markets and for events to create pedestrian malls
- **Mixed Traffic** with max speed of **15mph** - as fatalities increase exponentially above that speed
- **Auto Priority** for thru streets with traffic at **25mph** max.

Bicycle network should be provided throughout the LSAP with convenient bike parking given high priority. This will extend the convenience of non-auto access beyond the LSAP.

Level of Service (LOS) should be eliminated in the LSAP so that pedestrian crosswalks and reduced traffic speeds can be prioritized (see Redwood City Downtown Precise Plan which eliminates LOS)

Three really unique features that LSAP already has are

- Sonora Court’s unique tree lined street
- The potential for a leafy green trail along the flood canal
- Peninsula Building Material site’s potential

Linking these three areas will immediately create a unique sense of place.

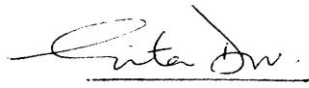
Sonora Court and the Peninsula Building materials site present an opportunity to link the two sides in the early phases of construction with pedestrian links.

The north-south retail corridor should be tightly linked to the housing south of the tracks, or it will not be really accessible to these residents.

<p>4. Open Space <i>A usable signature open space should serve multiple uses</i></p>	<p>The added residents and worker population both need open recreation space. The open space should be usable rather than a visual amenity, beautiful and safe. Both a green park and a public plaza could be considered, and closing off streets to make pedestrian malls can help extend the space. <i>Redwood City has a central public square that is used for events but also closes off streets all around the square to extend the pedestrian-only zone as needed.</i></p>
<p>5. Affordable housing goal <i>Workforce housing should be required for any zoning change the city controls or grants</i></p>	<p>LSAP should establish goals for affordable workforce housing and ensure that this is a high priority. Transit Oriented Development and affordable housing have a symbiotic relationship - residents of moderate and low-income households tend to support public transit the most and car ownership is lower than average.</p>
<p>9. Bicycle Master Plan <i>Commuters will use bicycles for up to about 5 miles. This is important because this is the hardest group to get out of their cars.</i></p>	<p>The LSAP bike master plan should be carefully connected to a wider bicycle network, as people will commute as far as 5 miles by bike if bike commuting is fast and safe. Bike boulevards^v provide safe speedy commuting.</p>
<p>10. Reduced parking <i>This is critical to the success of a station area plan. Over-parking undermines a TOD and creates Transit-Adjacent Development with traffic congestion</i></p> <p><i>Include a Transportation Management Association or Community Benefits District to share costs among multiple employers and residential developments</i></p>	<p>We strongly recommend the consideration of all strategies: <u>Unbundled parking</u> - combined with a Residential Permit parking program as needed to protect existing residential neighbors. Construction cost savings should be used to reduce rents. <u>Paid parking</u>, Congestion priced parking and Shared parking <u>Robust shuttle service</u> <u>Improved transit</u> options and transit passes <u>Bike lanes</u> designed for speed, safety and connectivity for a 5 mile radius <u>Attractive pedestrian experience</u> so people are pleased to walk <u>Senior housing</u> which needs fewer cars <u>Affordable Housing</u> where households often have one or no car</p>
<p>11. Complete Streets <i>Build this into the LSAP from the earliest phases. Set measurable goals for each mode of travel for success.</i></p>	<p>Establish a baseline for each mode of travel as part of LSAP and set 1 year, 5 year and 10 year goals that can be measured. Not measuring often leads to failure, as there is no feedback loop for changing strategies if needed.</p>
<p>12. EIR should study the cumulative impacts of the full build out</p>	<p>Since infrastructure cannot be changed later, the cumulative impacts should be examined at the outset and used for making the final decisions. Will the proposed LSAP meet climate action plan goals?</p>

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important design effort for the City of Sunnyvale. We look forward to continued involvement in the Lawrence Station Area Plan.

Respectfully submitted:



Gita Dev
Sustainable Land Use Committee
Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter

Cc Michael J Ferreira, Executive Committee, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter
Bonnie McClure, Chair, Sustainable Land-Use Committee
Megan Fluke, Conservation Program manager
Gladwyn DeSouza, Chair, Transportation Committee

Endnotes:

ⁱ **Healthy jobs /housing balance** - The California Department of Finance considers a 1.5 jobs-to-housing unit ratio to be healthy. Any ratio above 1.5 Jobs/housing unit signifies there is insufficient number of housing units to meet the needs of the local workforce. The EIR for the precise plan will specify the anticipated jobs growth and the anticipated number of residential units generated by the precise plan.

ⁱⁱ **FAR/DUA:** Floor Area Ratio and Dwelling Units per Acre are both zoning terms

ⁱⁱⁱ **Satellite parking:** The city should plan to provide public parking and use California's [parking cash-out program](#). State law requires certain employers who provide subsidized parking for their employees to offer a cash allowance in lieu of a parking space. This law is called the parking cash-out program. The intent of the law is to reduce vehicle commute trips and emissions by offering employees the option of "cashing out" their subsidized parking space and taking transit, biking, walking or carpooling to work. In a study, "cashing out" reduced total vehicle emissions for commuting by 12 percent

^{iv} **Mid-block crosswalks and passageways:** This is because walking around a 400' block is well over a quarter of a mile. Therefore, mid block pathways are critical for pedestrian convenience in getting around (e.g. the pedestrian "paseos" on Castro Street in Mountain View are mid-block shortcuts connected with mid-block crosswalks)

^v **Bike Boulevards:** Palo Alto has a very convenient bike boulevard from the downtown station, along the tracks and thru a residential neighborhood on Park Blvd with no thru auto traffic.



*A Sense of Place
Sonora Court could have slow traffic and wide sidewalks with its attractive shaded tree-lined street*



Pedestrian Priority in Santana Row—slow traffic, pedestrian street furniture, wide mid-block crosswalks with no curb . A farmers market closes off streets on weekends, night-time open air music